

## **Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program**

The Department of Homeland Security's Preparedness Directorate's Office of Grants Training in cooperation with the U.S. Fire Administration recently held its annual "application period" asking rural, urban and suburban fire departments in need of training and fire equipment across the nation to receive a portion of the \$545 million available this year.

In its infancy, a mere six years ago, this program received "paper only" grant applications. Now "fully automated" – they are one of the foremost e-gov application systems in the nation. Using its e-grant process, over 18,000 automated applications were received this year. Of these, more than half moved forward for a very competitive peer review. Out of the 9,500 plus applications reviewed, it is expected that approximately 4,500 awards will be made. This funding translates into much needed equipment and training – fire engines, personal protective equipment, safety training and more. Nearly 80% of these dollars goes to rural fire departments (as defined by the Department of Homeland Security, a rural area is a population of less than 25,000).

Over the last six years, the AFG program has been helping fire departments throughout the United States. Late last year, the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and Homeland Security began working within a restructured version of their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This enhanced MOU provides the framework for these agencies to work together toward common goals and support each other in the national effort to reduce loss of life, property, and natural resources.

"Collaboration is critical in the fire program because we know we can't do it alone. It takes federal, state, local and tribal cooperators working together toward mutual objectives." said Steve Pezzetti, Fire Program Specialist, Department of Homeland Security.

Everyday, structural and wildland firefighters place their lives on the line to help others. Firefighters protect people, property, as well as natural resources. Firefighting goes beyond simply a job – firefighters do this important work because they love what they do and we all reap the benefits.